

STATEMENT OF

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Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Sherman, Members of the Committee, it is a privilege and an honor to appear before you today to discuss our latest efforts along the border, including the role the National Guard will play in assisting the Department of Homeland Security, and especially U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), in our mission of securing our Nation's borders.

The DHS and CBP remain steadfast in our commitment to gain control of our borders, and the announcements in May by the President will move us rapidly forward on that commitment. Let me first state that National Guard support of and coordination with DHS and the Border Patrol is nothing new. While this new infusion will be on a larger scale, the Border Patrol has a history of nearly two decades working with National Guard units to utilize their unique expertise, workforce, technology, and assets in support of our mission and as a force-multiplier. Today there are currently hundreds of National Guard troops assisting DHS, primarily in our counter-narcotics mission.

CBP acts as the guardian of our Nation's borders, safeguarding the homeland by protecting the American public against the entry of terrorists and the instruments of terrorism, while enforcing the laws of the United States and fostering the Nation's economic security through lawful travel and trade. Within CBP's larger mission, the Border Patrol's time-honored duty of interdicting illegal aliens and drugs and those who attempt to smuggle them across our borders between the ports of entry remains a priority. The nexus between our post September 11th mission and our traditional role is clear, terrorists and violent criminals may exploit smuggling routes used by migrants to enter the United States illegally and do us harm. Reducing illegal entries across our borders is now more than ever a matter of national security.

Since 2001, border security funding has increased by 66% and the Border Patrol has increased to over 11,700 agents. Since 2001, the Border Patrol and DHS components have apprehended and returned more than 6 million people entering

America illegally. In fiscal year 2005 alone, the Border Patrol apprehended nearly 1.2 million undocumented aliens attempting to enter the United States illegally. .

Despite the progress we have made, we do not yet have control of our border. This is evidenced by the fact that as of June 1, 2006, there have been 527 violent incidents between the Ports of Entry, 57 such incidents at the Ports of Entry, and 3 in the CBP Air & Marine environment. The port of entry violence primarily includes aggravated assaults, vehicle assaults, and rockings. Furthermore, during this same period of time, the Border Patrol has documented 177 incidents of bandit activity in FY 2006, 81% occurring near Yuma, AZ and arrested 237 gang members, including 172 Mara Salvatruchas (MS-13).

To secure operational control of the borders, President Bush has announced a plan to increase the number of Border Patrol Agents by 6,000 by the end of 2008. This will bring the total number of Border Patrol Agents to over 18,000, doubling the number of agents since the President took office in 2001. These additional agents will serve as a tremendous resource in combating violence and the organizations that prey on innocent people on both sides of the border.

DoD support will be an immediate, short-term measure that allows the DHS to increase their deterrence and border security capabilities while DHS trains additional Border Patrol Agents and implements the Secure Border Initiative. One of many capabilities the National Guard will provide is an increased detection capability to allow a quicker response by law enforcement officers. Additionally, many Border Patrol Agents who are currently working in clerical and logistics jobs will return to the front lines to detect and apprehend illegal aliens.

National Guard units will assist DHS by providing logistical and administrative support, operating detection systems, providing mobile communications, augmenting border-related intelligence analysis efforts, building and installing

border security infrastructure, and providing training. However, law enforcement along the border between the ports of entry will remain the responsibility of Border Patrol Agents. The National Guard will play no direct law enforcement role in the apprehension, custodial care or security of those who are detained. With the National Guard providing surveillance and logistical support, Border Patrol agents will be free to concentrate on law enforcement functions of border enforcement. The support of tactical infrastructure engineering and technology by the National Guard will be a tremendous force-multiplier, expanding the enforcement capacity for the Border Patrol, while freeing up additional Agents who are performing some of these support tasks today.

As I noted before, the Border Patrol and the National Guard have an established relationship going back nearly two decades. Guard units and personnel have been supporting counter-drug operations, in addition to conducting missions ranging from engineering support to aerial reconnaissance. In San Diego, the National Guard has worked on the San Diego Border Infrastructure System, and in Arizona, the National Guard has constructed roads for use by the Border Patrol. For nearly two decades, these types of missions have been utilized as valuable training for National Guard personnel, and have been conducted as part of the Guard's annual training. The results of these missions have greatly improved the Border Patrol's ability to access terrain and enforce the law between our Nation's ports of entry, and the President's plan builds on this successful relationship.

We recognize the challenges that lie ahead. Our goal is nothing less than to gain, maintain, and expand operational control of our Nation's borders through the right mix of personnel, technology, and tactical infrastructure. The assistance of the National Guard and our federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners will greatly enhance our ability to effectively and efficiently protect our Nation's borders.

The men and women of U.S. Customs and Border Protection face these challenges every day with vigilance, dedication to service, and integrity as we work to strengthen national security and protect America and its citizens. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today. I look forward to responding to any questions that you might have.